Name: *The Canterbury Tales*

By Geoffrey Chaucer

The Prologue: An introduction to a series of short stories.

Literary Focus: Characterization-Characters may be presented by means of description, through their actions, speech, or thoughts.

Lines 1-18 (Middle English Translation)

What month does this take place?

What does this **season** signify?

Where do folks long to go? Line 12.

What is the exact destination? Line 16.

Why? What is a hooly blissful martir? Line 17.

Who is the martyr (See note 17)?

Lines 19-42

Where do the pilgrims unite? Town and Inn?

How many sundry folk?

Before the story continues, what is the narrator going to do? Lines 35-42.

Focus Characters: Knight Lines 42-80, Nun Lines 122-166, Woman of Bath 455-487, Parson Lines 488-539, Plowman Lines 539-555, Summoner Lines 641-688, and Pardoner Lines 689-734.

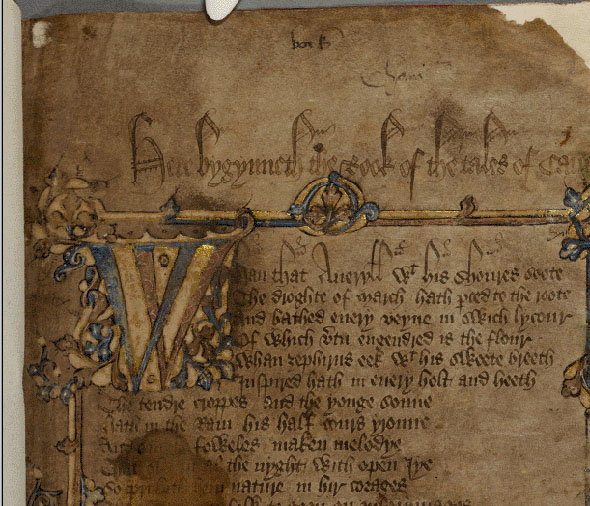
Finish the Frame Story: Lines 767-855

What does the host propose to speed the journey?

What is the prize?

Who is the judge?

How will they decide who will tell the first story?



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**\*As you are analyzing each character, ask yourself what these characters reveal about medieval society? What characteristics were valued and condemned?\***

Focus Characters: Knight Lines 42-80, Nun Lines 122-166, Woman of Bath 455-487, Parson Lines 488-539, Plowman Lines 539-555, Miller Lines 561-584,Summoner Lines 641-688, and Pardoner Lines 689-734.

1. Knight (Page 89, Line 42)

What does he do?

What are his past experiences?

What is he wearing?

Who is he traveling with?

What does he believe in/what does he embody or support?

1. Nun (Page 91, Line 121)

What is her title?

What is she particular about? Line 131

What other language does she speak? How well? See Note 129.

What does she look like?

What is she wearing?

What is hanging from her rosary? What does this tell you about her devotion?

1. Woman/Wife of Bath (Page 98, Line 455)

What is her physical impairment?

What does she do for a living?

What is she wearing?

How many husbands has she had?

Where else has she traveled?

1. Parson (Page 100, Line 488)

What is his job?

Was he educated? How? What did he know?

What is a tithe? See Note 496.

Instead of collecting, what did he do for his congregation?

If his flock = followers, what is the parson (symbol)?

Why is he such a good parson? How does he model his faith?

1. Plowman (Page 101, Line 539)

Who was he related to?

What does he do for a living?

What kind of a worker is he?

What did he fervently believe or follow?

What did he wear? See Note 555.What did he ride?

1. Miller (Page 101, Line 561)

What did he look like?

What kind of stories did he like to tell?

How did he steal the grain he was milling? See Note 581.

What instrument does he play?

1. Summoner (Page 103, Line 641)

What does he do for a living? See Note 559 on page 101.

What did he look like? See Note 642.

After indulging in too much red wine, what did he do?

Did he really understand what he was saying?

How could you avoid a summons? What did the Summoner accept?

1. Pardoner (Page 104, Line 689)

Who is he traveling with?

Where had he just visited?

What does he look like?

What does he do for a living? See Note 698.

What does he claim to sell? What are they really?



Why does he sing? What does he receive?

*A woodcut from William Caxton's second edition of the Canterbury Tales printed in 1483.*

After reading this character descriptions, categorize the eight pilgrims in the chart below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ideal or Perfect | Average or Harmless | Evil or Corrupt |
| 1. | 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. | 2. |
| 3. |  | 3. |

What characteristics do the “ideal” pilgrims share?

1.

2.

3.

What characteristics do the “corrupt” pilgrims share?

1.

2.

3.

What characteristics do the female pilgrims share?

1.

2.

3.

In conclusion: What were the most valued virtues and the most hated vices during the middle ages?

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